



Apparent-Time Low Vowel Changes  
among Mexican-Americans and  
Anglos in Austin, Texas

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# Texas English

- Associated with South Midland and Southern speech (Bailey & Tillery 2006; Bailey et al 1991; ANAE)
- Dallas area distinct - “Texas South” (ANAE)
- Based primarily on Anglo speech
- Assumed to be Anglo-led (Bailey et al., 1991)

# Ongoing Texas English Research

- Houston (Niedzielski's HUES)
- San Antonio (Bayley, Santa Ana)
- Rural Central Texas ("Springville", Bailey & Cukor-Avila)

# The Texas English Project: Austin

- Austin Texas

- Medium-sized urban center (<1 million)
- In the 1990s, Austin's population grew by 48% and between 2000 and 2006 it was rated as the 3rd most rapidly growing city in America.
- 65% white, 10% African-American, 30% Latino (53% white, non-hispanic)

Fig. 2. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2002.



Fig. 3. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2012.



# Project Goals



- Sound Change: Ethnolects in contact
- Importance of minorities' roles in majority sound changes (Fought, 2002)
- Who leads change in ethnically-diverse contact milieux?

# Minority & Majority Dialects in Contact

- Assumed that minority speakers pressured to assimilate to majority norms.
- Influence is bidirectional.
- Majority speakers may adopt minority features for covert prestige (Preston, 1999)

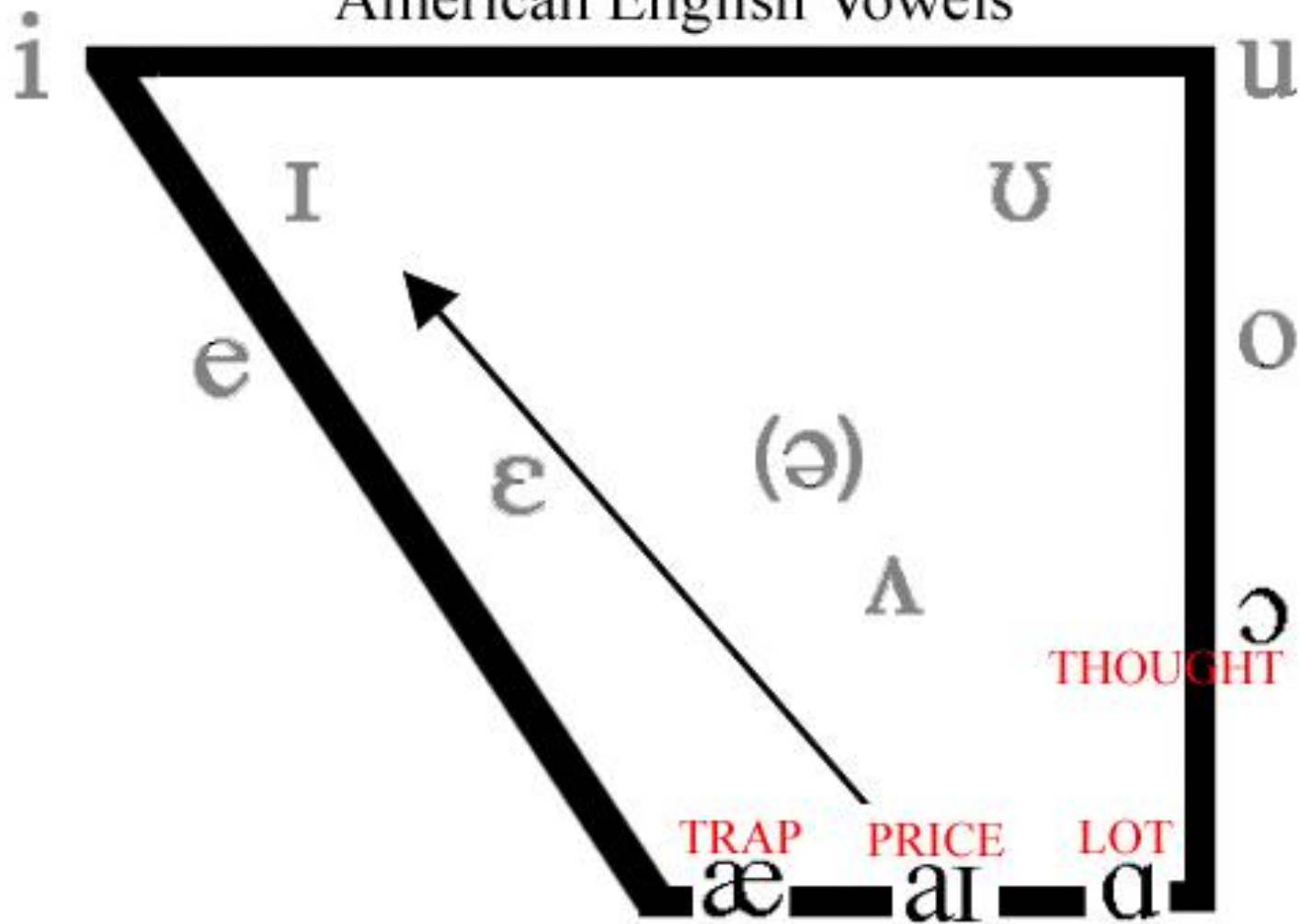


# Research Questions



1. How are low vowels realized by Anglo and Latino residents of Austin?
2. Are those realizations different across ethnicity?
3. Are those realizations different across age?

# Stylization of American English Vowels



# Low Vowel Paradigm

- PRICE, LOT, THOUGHT, TRAP (Wells, 1982)
- PRICE: status of monophthongization
- LOT~THOUGHT: merged or distinct
- TRAP: raised, backed, stationary

# PRICE



- Monophthongization: key feature of Southern speech (ANAE)
  - Blocks TRAP retraction and LOT fronting (Bigham 2008)
- Texas English:
  - monophthongal PRICE among Anglos
  - diphthongal PRICE among Latinos
  - (Tillery et al 2004; Thomas 2001)

# LOT~THOUGHT



- Merger: key feature of “Third Dialect” (Labov 1996)
  - Promotes TRAP retraction (Gordon 2004; Bigham 2008)
- Texas English:
  - merger incomplete among Anglos (ANAE)
  - merger complete among young, urban Anglos (Bailey et al 1991)
  - merger: Latinos to LOT; Anglos to THOUGHT (Thomas 2001)

# TRAP



- Movement up left periphery first stage of NCS (ANAE)
- Retraction in Canadian shift (Clarke et al. 1995; Roeder & Jarmasz 2008) and other “Third Dialects” (Eckert 2004; Bigham 2008)
- Texas English (Thomas 2001):
  - Latinos- front and low, even pre-nasally
  - Anglos- raises pre-nasally

# Methodology

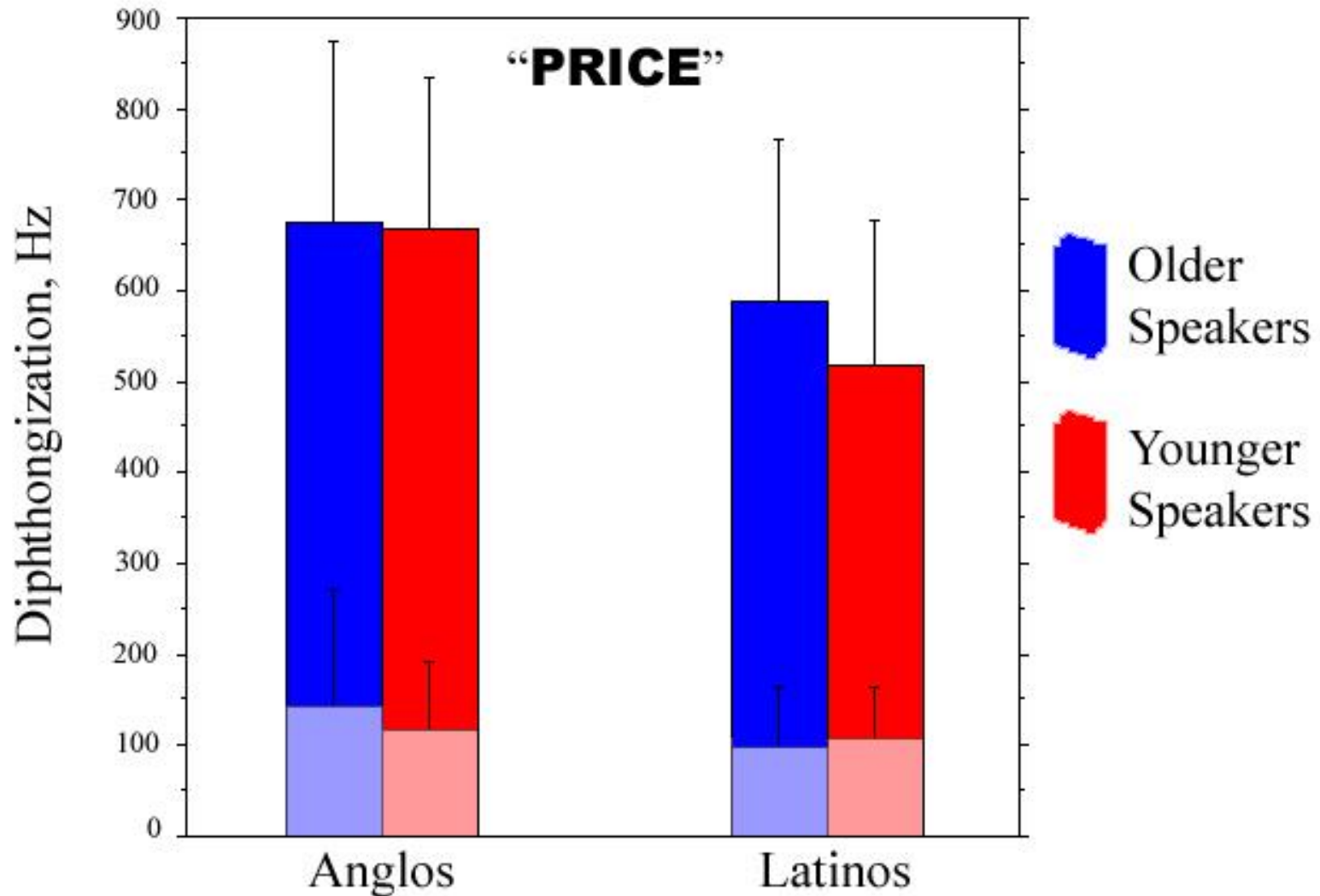
- 14 female participants

- Full adults (older) & emerging adults (younger) (Arnett 2002)
- Anglo & Latino
- Evenly distributed across categories
- Span of classes and educational levels
- Austinites

- Data

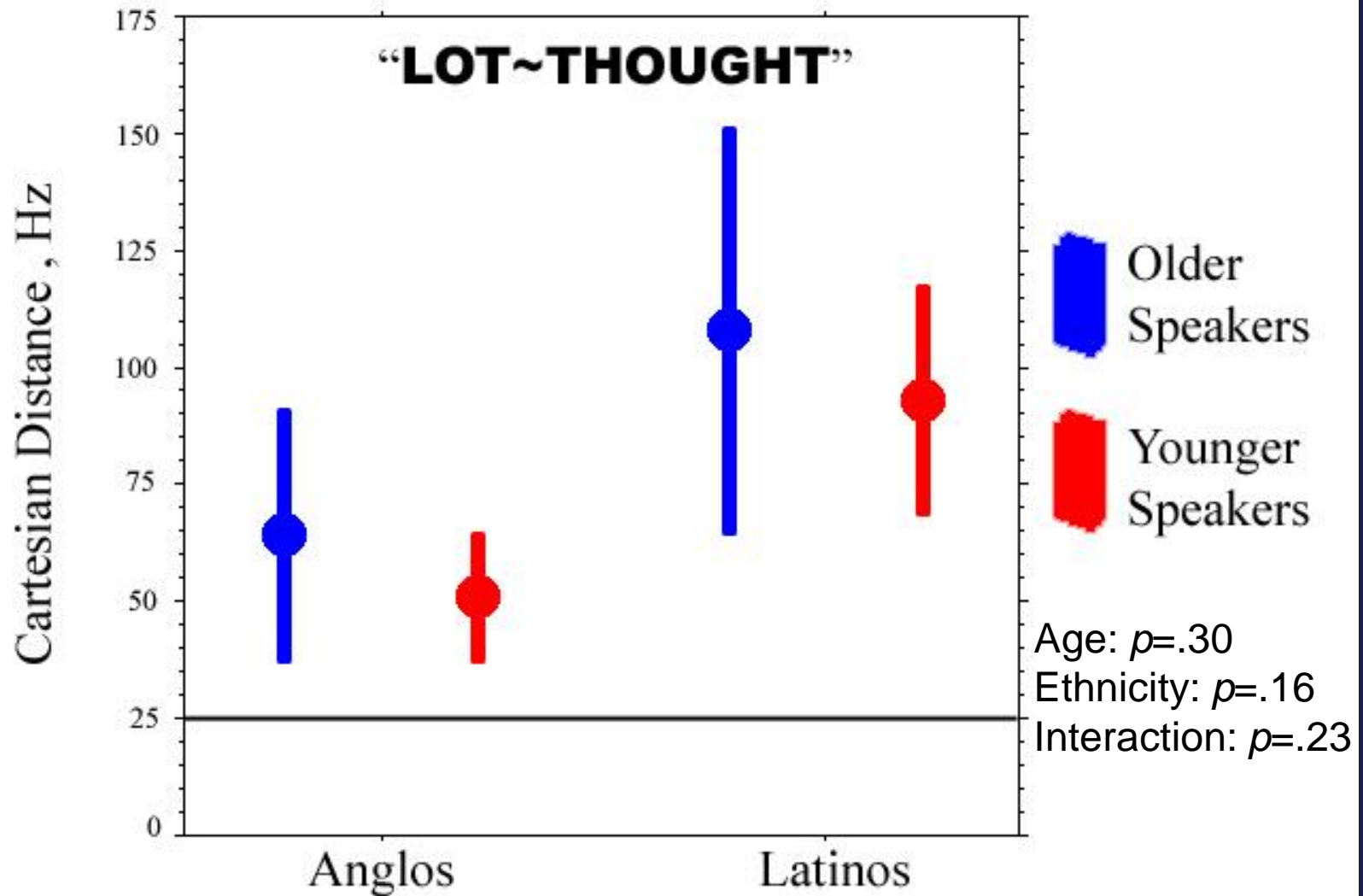
- Word list recitations, *bVt* & *hVd* tokens, six repetitions each
- F1 and F2 measurements at five points
- Cartesian Distance

# PRICE non-monophthongization



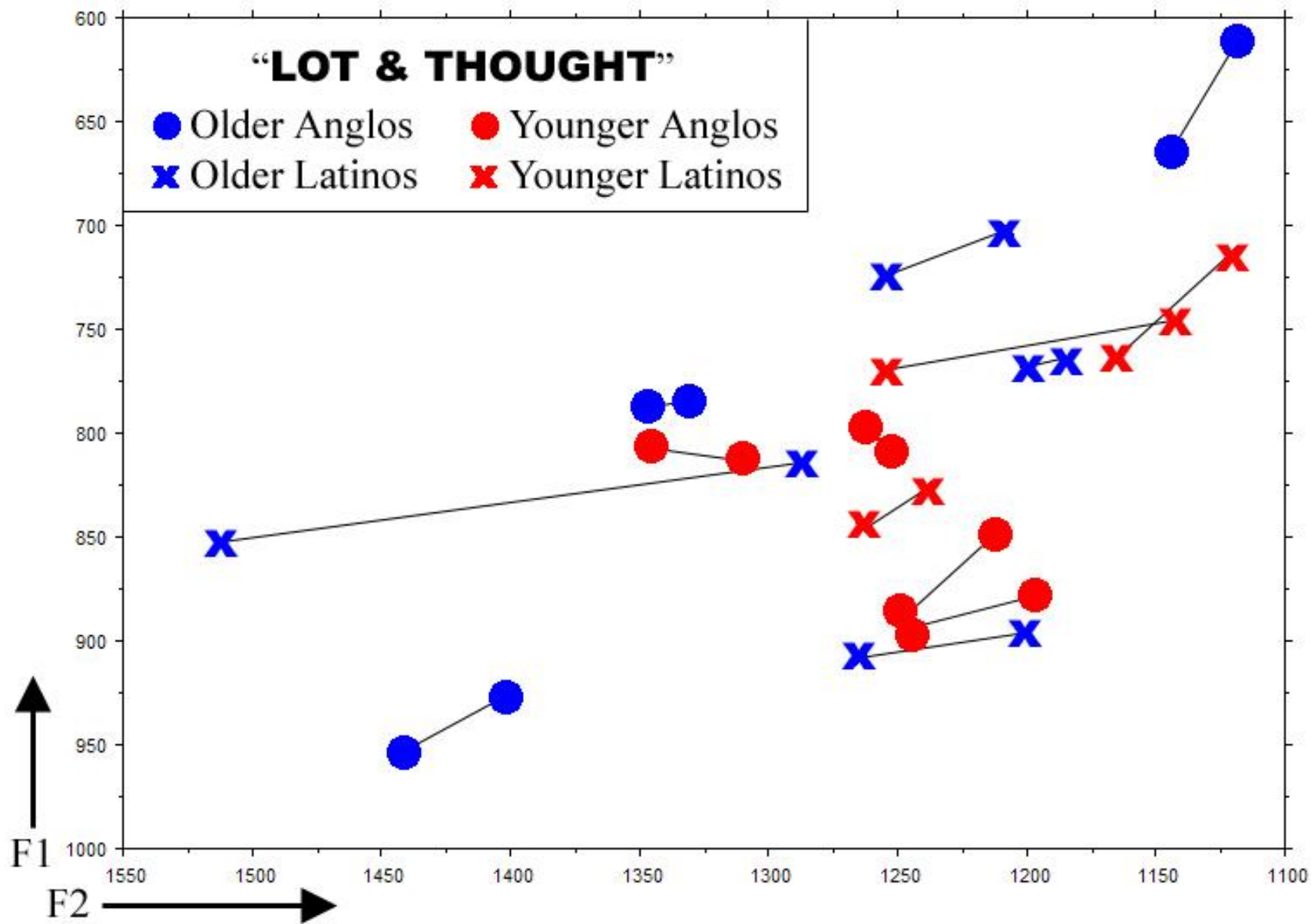


# LOT~THOUGHT merger

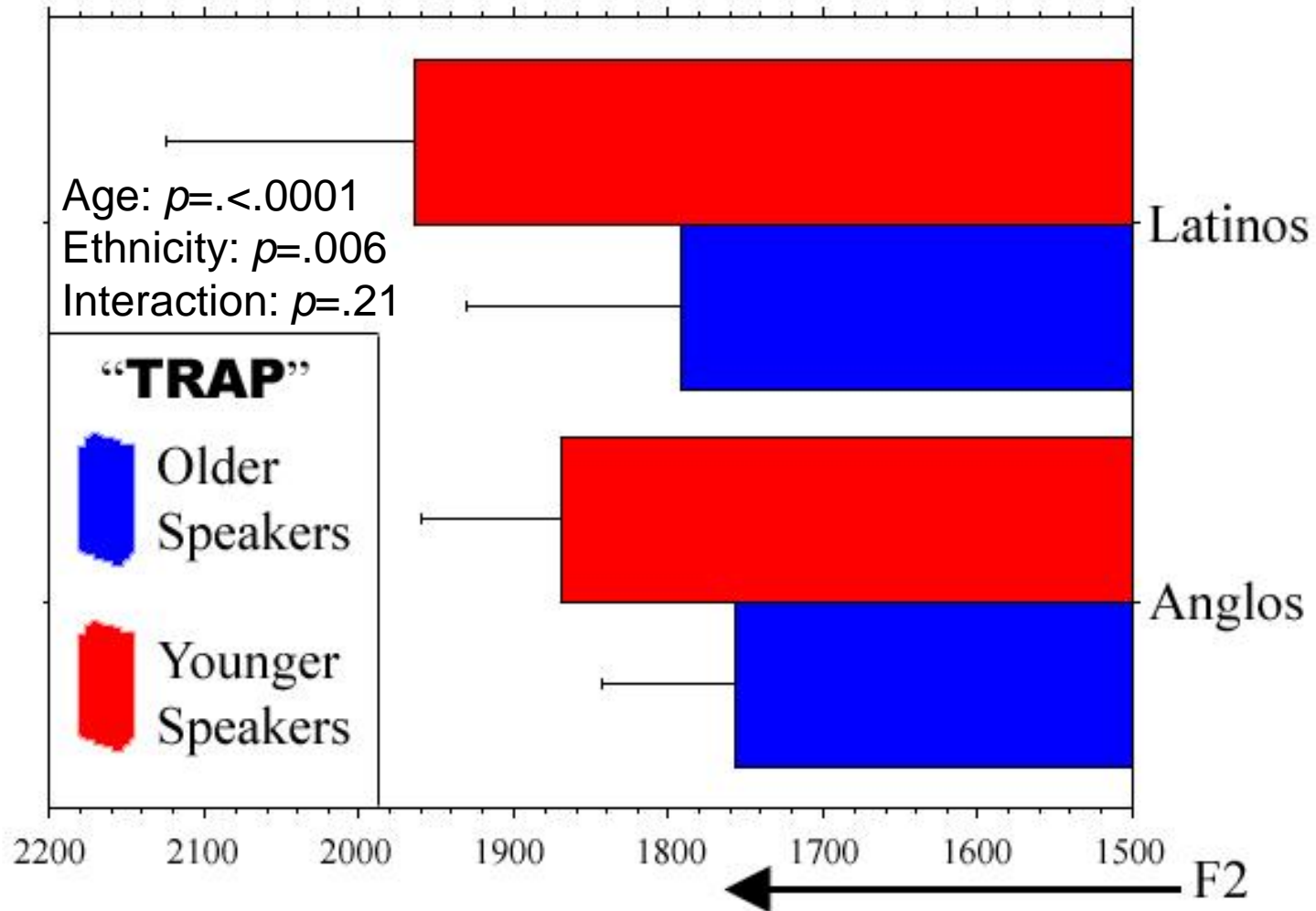


# “LOT & THOUGHT”

- Older Anglos
- Younger Anglos
- ✕ Older Latinos
- ✕ Younger Latinos



# TRAP fronting (!)



# Conclusion: \*Austin\* Texas English

## ● PRICE

- completely diphthongal
- No difference between Anglo & Latino speakers

## ● LOT~THOUGHT

- no distinction in Latino & Anglo placement
- distinct in production but becoming closer
- majority-led change

## ● TRAP

- fronting (!)
- minority-led change

# What's Next for the Texas English Project?

- Adding a third, extra-older, generation
- Adding males to the data
- Adding African-American speakers
- Analyzing additional stylistic contexts for data



# The End

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